

Rhode Island Emergency Management Advisory Council

Meeting Notice

THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL WILL BE HELD:

September 23, 2008

10:00 AM

Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation

Narragansett Room

315 Iron Horse Way, Suite 101

Providence, Rhode Island 02908

MINUTES

Attendance:

Lt. Governor Roberts

RIEMA Director David Smith

Klaus Oâ€™Neal

Steve Preston

Robert Howe

Joseph Baker

Charles Hawkins

Jeff Stevens

Mike Mulhane

Michelle Burnett

John Riendeau

Rich Blott
Geof Milner
James Lanni
Thomas Arlern
Paul Stasiuk
Vin Marzullo
Dan Meuse
Vladimir Ibarra

Called to order at 10:09am.

Minutes from the previous meeting were approved unanimously.

The Chair discussed the importance of flood insurance as Rhode Island remembers the 70th anniversary of the Hurricane of 1938 and as the nation watched the aftermath and cleanup of Hurricane Ike

The Chair recognized RIEMA Director David Smith to introduce Michelle Burnett. Ms. Burnett is the state Floodplain Manager and coordinator of the state's efforts in the National Flood Insurance Program.

Presentation Highlights

Â. Every community in RI participates in NFIP and therefore, everyone

in RI is eligible for flood insurance. Obviously, rates are dependant on the floodplain and characteristics of an individual property.

Â· The federal government offers competitive grant programs for communities around flood protection and education. The state is the grant applicant and passes funds through to local governments.

Â· One of the most important functions of the state is the maintenance of maps for floodplains. These maps are used by insurance agents, community planners, emergency management personnel, builders, and environmental groups. Rhode Island is in the process of digitizing maps and should be completely digital by 2010. While different state agencies maintain similar map systems, there are different purposes; DEM manages dam data while RIEMA manages storm data.

Â· The regulatory powers and interaction of CRMC, DEM, RIEMA and municipal governments can be confusing and can become tangled. CRMC regulates setbacks, septic issues and direct coastal impacts. DEM regulates wetlands. Local governments regulate planning and building. RIEMA does not have any regulatory powers in building, but is contacted for recommendations regarding floodplain issues. The goal of RIEMA is to be available to municipalities throughout the whole process and encourages involving RIEMA at the earliest point, including the planning and zoning process.

Â· There is inherent conflict between Freeboard (building higher for better flood management) and height restrictions (especially in coastal communities).

Â· Federally backed mortgages in a flood plain require flood insurance, which accounts for about 50% landowners nationwide. Also, if a property owner receives FEMA assistance, they must buy flood insurance.

Â· What does flood insurance cover? Any structural or mechanical damage attributable to water. It does not include finish damage or property damage.

Â· Roughly 3.3% of Rhode Island households are covered by flood insurance.

Â· The federal government runs a community rating program that allows communities that make flood mitigation changes to be eligible for reduced flood insurance rates for their community. Communities can qualify for up to 45% off premiums depending on their level of participation. RIEMA has a goal of increasing the number of communities participating by 2 by the end of the year.

Â· There is a community buyout program for structurally repetitive loss. This program allows municipalities to purchase properties that have repetitive major losses. The program is not utilized often in

Rhode Island.

Â The biggest flood danger in Rhode Island is in Barrington.

The chair thanked Ms. Burnett for her presentation.

The chair recognized Director Smith to discuss recent RIEMA activities. He reported a successful hurricane exercise on September 13 as well as a successful tabletop exercise on evacuating Narragansett, especially focusing on the integration of URI, due to the student population. Additionally, General Bray recently attended the national adjutant generalâ€™s meeting. A major issue was discussions at a federal level about commodity distribution in emergency events. Director Smith also discussed the importance of bringing colleges and universities to table in Emergency Preparedness.

The council briefly discussed the potential for issues surrounding heating costs this winter, and especially the cost of home heating oil.

The council discussed communications during emergencies. The suggestion was made that the 211 system should be used as a vehicle of identifying needs that are non-emergency. During Tropical Storm Hanna, 911 received 170 calls that should have been 211 calls.

The council discussed an issue involving the new construction of

emergency shelters. Woonsocket is building 2 new shelters, and the new life safety code calls for 200sq. ft. per person for shelters. This makes new shelter construction virtually impossible.

DOT hosted corporate security review and is planning risk assessment in conjunction with the federal government.

Director Smith reported that local Emergency Management directors and RIEMA are communicating better with the advent of the new WebEOC system.

Broadcastersâ€™ association is promoting the new elderly walk-away alert system. The broadcastersâ€™ association has a form that local police departments can fill out to get the system started for their city or town.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:27am.